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THE BRETHREN PUB. HOUSE,
ASHLAND, Ashland Co., OHIO.

ASHLAND, O., DEC 29., 1886.

Prospect and Retrospect.

The work of another year on this paper has closed, and when the spot that is regarded as the starting place is reached, it is only common to look back over the course and then view what is before. There are some tender memories that have been treasured during the year, and there are errors to deprecate that are treasured along with that which is pleasant to remember. This is good. If there was nothing to remember and regret, then a notion of self-sufficiency would become a tyrant over the mind, and unfit it for the virtuous works of life.

The Brethren Church has made commendable progress. In proportion to our numbers, the per cent of increase is greater than that of any other church with a larger body of communicants in this land. This is due to the truth, that the Gospel has been preached without the traditions and interpretations of men, while to the seeker of salvation, has been offered the liberty and privilege to satisfy his conscience in all things commanded by the Scriptures. Through the effort of faithful workers, many souls have been made to rejoice in the hope of salvation, and to glory in the cross of Christ. This work is an honor to the church.

Another work that betokens a future for the church is the good number of substantial churches that have been erected and dedicated to the service of God during the year. Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, and other states have shared in this work. Let the future bring forth what it will, these churches will be occupied by devout worshippers who shall sing psalms to the honor of God, and offer the sacrifice of praise to the blessed Jesus, and they shall be homes for the seekers of life, and there the faithful pilgrims will find beautiful spots to cheer them in the painful journey to the heavenly country. This noble work will be inscribed upon the monument erected to the honor of the Brethren Church, should the conflict of ages close its existence tomorrow.

In the mission work progress has been made. The foundation has been laid, and the future awaits a structure to be erected upon it; and it shall be done. There is evidence that the work is of God, and it will go on. His servants may be feeble, miserable sinners, but out of weakness He brings forth strength,

and of the sinner is made meet for the Master's use.

In matters of church discipline, the body as a whole is at sea. The efforts to hold a convention have proven ineffectual, and questions which should have been put at rest by some course, are still opened and unsettled. This is our judgment. God has some other plan, or he would have ruled to have a conference. We believe in God also in Christ.

The prospect is promising. The past year has taught some severe lessons, and their value will not be lost in the work of the future. Long strides have been made toward learning the defects in the elements of church organization, and they are being studied that they may be remedied whenever it is possible to come together in national conference. When this is once properly accomplished, then the onward march will not be impeded by doubts and misapprehensions.

The demand for a national conference is imperative, nothing can be gained by further delaying the matter of fixing a time, and much may be lost. If there is to be any change, the sooner it is made the better, so that each church and each individual knows where he stands; and if the congregational system of church government is to be replaced by a Presbyterian or Episcopal, then the sooner that matter is settled the better it will be for all parties concerned.

As to this paper, its course is not satisfactory. It is commended of the editorial management that articles supporting what is called close communion and such as are opposed to secret societies shall be admitted, and all that take a contrary view shall be suppressed. As we have said, we say again, that in this relation we are the servant of the church, and the church is divided on the manner of disposing of these questions. It is not a question of doctrine so much as it is the principle upon which it is to be handled. Personally, we know that many of the leading ministers of the Brethren Church will support a measure to make this a matter that each church shall dispose of itself, according to the congregational idea of church government. This they will not do because they believe what is called open communion, but because it involves a principle of church government; and if a conference must pass upon this question, then the gates will be thrown wide open to legislation just the same as is now found in the German Baptists. Therefore as the servant of a common party, to suppress one side and encourage the other, would be wrong in the situation.

Whenever the leaders in the church agree upon a common course in this matter, we are ready and willing to do their bidding, if the course is approved by our conscience, if it is not, then we gladly surrender this post to him who can do it.

But the great question is, what are we living the religious life for. Is it to glory in other men's flesh, or to exercise ourselves in the power of an endless life? Shall we pay tithes as did the Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, justice, love and

mercy? Are we going to strain out gnats and swallow camels?

Pride is an evil monster, a thousand times more dangerous to the integrity of our Church and Christianity, in the sight of God, than is the matter of settling the question of open and close communion between a conference of all the churches and making it a matter for each church to adjust for itself. Pride is marching right on—why not legislate about that, or write against it when it is more insidious, more destructive to spiritual development, more to be feared than these questions which at most are no more than abused liberality, unnecessary severity, or disobedience of the least commandments.

During the coming year, the EVANGELIST will stand for the defense of the Gospel religion as it has in the past. It will acknowledge no discipline but the New Testament, and will defend the Congregational plan of church government. It believes that the Gospel is a complete rule of Christian faith and practice, and its special effort shall be to encourage more devoutness, more faithfulness to Christian duty, and more charity for all men and the brethren.

We mean to be popular with Christ, and as time is fast passing away, we must press on in the divine life or death will come on and no commendable good will have been accomplished.

We close the year trusting in the promises of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the future, and we expect to see the Brethren Church march on from victory to victory until it stands as a living monument, testifying to the grandeur, endurance and power of true gospel religion and that it is better to obey God than men.

With this purpose of heart and the Gospel of Christ, we say farewell to the old year, and offer our family of readers the hand of fellowship in the labor of love during the coming year.

Next Year.

Next year another page, the first one of the inside will be used as an editorial page also, and brother E. L. Yoder and E. Mason who are financially interested in this office, expect to take a hand in making the paper interesting for its readers during the coming year. With this aid and the discipline that the office work is now under, our attention will not be required so closely, and we can give more attention to literary features of the paper. We therefore feel justified in promising to our patrons a paper of increased interest and value for the coming year.

Brethren please favor us with your encouragement in the way of increased lists of subscribers for the coming year. Every lover of our cause should take the church paper. It costs only three cents each week, and every family can bear this expense for the benefit of the soul's interest, and the salvation of the sinner.

The Investigator.

A number of subscriptions have already been received for articles have been sent in for publication. Remember that the Investigator, and several subscription for the monthly is 50 cents a year, 25 cents for six months. For \$2.00 the EVANGELIST

and the Investigator will be sent to any address, and the Brethren Annual or 15 cents worth of trates will be given as a premium.

The new paper is designed to supply the demand for a medium for the investigation of religious subjects, apart from a family, church paper, whose many readers find no pleasure in the perusal of controversial matter. The first number will appear about the middle of January, and thereafter about the first of the month.

Now is the time to renew your subscription.

EDITORIAL ITEMS.

Hundreds of our Subscriptions expire in the next month. We do not wish to part company with one of our readers. If the EVANGELIST has been a friend and comforter during the past year; if it has brought you tidings of the work of God; if it has comforted you in times of trial and strengthened you for the battle of life, let it have your patronage another year.

Bro. Ira Slotter of this office is spending two weeks at home. His mother is sister Laura Slotter.

Sister R. F. Mallott, of North Liberty, expects to spend the winter in Indiana.

Another "longfelt want," according to the *Vindicator*, is to be supplied in the German Baptist church. Jesse Calvert, at Warsaw, Indiana, is to commence the publication of a new paper, to be called *The Christian Field*, a monthly with 16 pages and 48 columns. We wonder whether this is the fore-runner of a new division in the G. B. church?

Bro. Simon Mikesell, of Troy, Ohio, writes us that he was "called home from Iowa by a telegram from my wife, my youngest son being very low with typhoid fever. But he is now better at this writing".

Bro. A. A. Cober returned to North Liberty, to fill his appointments after his visit here last week. His mission here was a friendly visit to the College. He attended school here, and he has not forgotten the institution and the associations of friendship he formed while here.

After the first number in the new year the paper will be discontinued to all who subscribed for only a short time, unless they renew. Will our patrons do what they can to keep them in the list of readers?

Bro. John A. Miller, of Rossville, Ind., sends for a hundred of the cheap tracts, saying, "I think they will do good if properly used." They certainly will. When tracts can be procured for 25 cents a hundred, post paid, or \$2.00 per thousand, by express, the country ought to be sowed full of our doctrine.

Bro. R. F. Mallott writes that they held a nice communion at Hudson. He starts for Milford, Ind., this week.

Bro. J. H. Swihart writes that he began meetings at Oakville, Ind., in a store room on the 21st, and that he has good congregations and excellent interest.

The new church house at South Bend is a handsome and well-finished building, which will seat three hundred persons in the main audience room, and there are other apartments with folding doors as partitions which can also be used when it is necessary. It was dedicated without debt, brother D. C. Ullery paying all claims against it. Bro. Ullery has been very liberal toward the church.

The paper is small this time, and the Children will not find their department this week. Next week they will be heard again, and a number of them have sent in their bright little letters, which will appear then. Several have also sent in ten cents for the Educational Fund.

Bro. Mason visited his family last week, and spent a short time here and then went to the Miami Valley, where he expects to engage in earnest work for his churches.

The Annual is now being mailed to those who have ordered it. Send in your orders now. Price 10 cents, or one dollar per dozen.

We have in store a good variety of articles for the inside of the paper for the next two or three weeks.

Bro. Bowman, of Harrisonburg, Va., J. H. Swihart, of Rossville, Ind., Jacob W. Beer, of Nickerson, Kans.; sister Sadie Trent, of Pa., are among the members who have made us glad with nice lists of subscribers for 1887, about Christmas time. Other agents are busy at work, and we wonder whether they will give us a surprise about New Years.

A brother writes: "I will willingly do all I can for the EVANGELIST, for I think it worthy of our support, and has a tendency to build up, strengthen and encourage the members. I know you are in a trying position, and some time, no doubt, you feel perplexed and it may be yours to feel discouraged often, scarcely knowing what to do or say. I can only say look to the good Lord for wisdom and strength." Yes, brother, this is a trying position, and we are sometimes worn down and perplexed, but not discouraged. We believe we are in the Lord's work, and duty is the force that is actuating us. We love the cause, the Gospel and our brethren, and it is to gain a great success that we are directing our efforts. We pray to the Lord to bless the work if it is his and to kill it if it is not, and we are depending upon the Lord. Dear brother there is a mighty work for us to do, and let us be about our Master's business.

Bro. H. R. Holsinger was in this place awhile last week and packed his household goods to ship them to South Bend, Ind. He then left for Berlin, Pa., to move his family also. He will commence his labors as pastor of the church at South Bend at once, and expects to hold religious services every Lord's day.

Sister M. V. Wampler, of the Miami Valley is now visiting in this place and Wayne county. Her daughter is with her.

Bro. E. L. Yoder writes to a brother here that he is well pleased with the surroundings at Falls City, Neb., and that his family are all well. This is the first time that he has written such encouraging news since he left Ashland.

Whatever happens, let us not be too busy to sit at Jesus' feet.—Aitken.

Humble love, and not proud science, keeps the door of heaven.—Young.

I find that when the saints are under trials and well humbled, little sins raise great cries in the conscience; but in prosperity conscience is a pope, that gives dispensation and great latitude to our hearts.—Samuel Rutherford.

The Bible never speculates or halts in its teaching, but drives straight to the mark in its ever recurring "Thus saith the Lord," in the old Testament, and in the "Verily, verily, I say unto you," of the Master.—Dr. Culross.

Luther says: "Once upon a time the devil said to me, 'Martin Luther, you are a great sinner, and you will be damned.' 'Stop, stop!' said I; 'one thing at a time. I am a great sinner, it is true, though you have no right to tell me of it. I confess it. What next?' 'Therefore you will be damned.' 'That is not good reasoning. It is true, I am a great sinner; but it is written, Jesus Christ came to save sinners. So I shall be saved. Now go your way.' So I cut the devil off with his own sword, and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner." If we had God's word as an armor around us as effectually as Luther had, how harmless would be the temptations by which we are continually assailed by the evil one. Let us seek to be steeped in the word of God as to cut the devil off with his own sword at his first approach.—WATCHMAN.